

Chinese and English Horoscopy in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: The Astrological Doctrines of the Twelve Houses and the Lot of Fortune in *Xingxue dacheng* 星學大成 by Wan Minying 萬民英 (1521–1603) and *Christian Astrology* by William Lilly (1602–1681)

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Abstract

This study compares the astrological doctrines of the Twelve Houses and Lot of Fortune as they are explained in *Xingxue dacheng* 星學大成 of Wan Minying 萬民英 (1521–1603) and *Christian Astrology* by William Lilly (1602–1681). These two astrologers, who were near contemporaries, lived on opposite sides of Eurasia, yet both were heir to traditions of astrology that together reached back to identical origins in the Near East. The use of largely similar doctrines between both authors testifies to the enduring integrity of astrology throughout centuries of transmission westward and eastward through multiple cultures and languages.

Keywords

Wan Minying – William Lilly – astrology – horoscopy – Twelve Houses – lot of fortune

1 Introduction

The art of casting horoscopes (horoscopy) is one found across numerous cultures in Africa and Eurasia starting from antiquity through to modern times. We see horoscopy practiced in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds, and later in

Sassanian Iran and Islamdom, as well as in India, and eventually China and Japan. The fact that the integrity of horoscopic doctrines was so well preserved and faithfully transmitted across numerous cultures via multiple languages testifies to the enduring legacy of astrology and a persistent intellectual interest in it. The religious and linguistic landscape could and, in fact, did change considerably, but astrology remained ever present in the West and East. Although there is rising awareness concerning the historical practice of horoscopy in premodern China, it is necessary to further demonstrate firm parallels between Chinese traditions and those arguably better documented from elsewhere in the world, in order to prove that China was as much an heir to an ultimately Near Eastern art as were Latindom and Islamdom.¹

The present study will specifically discuss the origins and details of two doctrines of horoscopy, which were originally Hellenistic in origin, called the Twelve Houses and Lot of Fortune, as they are presented in the work of Wan Minying 萬民英 (1521–1603), a Chinese astrologer and scholar of the late Ming dynasty, with a simultaneous comparison to the work of William Lilly (1602–1681), an almost contemporary astrologer who lived on the other side of the Eurasian continent in England. I will show that both authors, who were representative of the astrological communities in their respective countries, understood these doctrines in very similar ways. This paper will also prove the significance of Hellenistic astrological doctrines that entered China via Indo-Iranian sources long before the influence of Catholic missionaries and the introduction of European astronomy, thereby highlighting the existence of a strong link of knowledge transmission stretching from the Near East to China.²

- 1 Recent studies on horoscopy and/or foreign (predominately Indian) astrology in China include Yano Michio, *Kūšyār ibn Labbā's Introduction to Astrology* (Tōkyō: Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, 1997); Yano Michio 矢野道雄, *Mikkyō senseijutsu: Sukuyōdō to Indo senseijutsu* 密教占星術: 宿曜道とインド占星術 (Tōkyō: Tōyōshoin, 2013); Bill M. Mak, "Yusi Jing: A Treatise of 'Western' Astral Science in Chinese and its Versified Version *Xitian yusi jing*," *SCIAMVS* 15 (2014): 105–169. In this study, I utilize the adjective "medieval" to generally refer to the period of time from roughly the sixth to the sixteenth centuries (the Sui-Tang to Ming dynasties in China). This periodization will apply to both China and western Afro-Eurasia for ease of reference. This is the same definition I employed in my earlier study: Jeffrey Kotyk, "The Sinicization of Indo-Iranian Astrology in Medieval China," *Sino-Platonic Papers* 282 (2018): 1–95. Although such a definition as this might be contested, the present study is not a proper platform from which to engage in such a discussion.
- 2 The present study will not discuss the introduction of European astrology, because it falls in the early premodern period of the seventeenth century, a period of important developments in the field of Chinese astrology. My aim is also to demonstrate that Chinese astrologers were practicing horoscopy from sources predating European influences. The following studies have investigated Chinese astrology during the seventeenth century in detail: Nicolas Standaert, "European Astrology in Early Qing China: Xue Fangzuo's and Smogulecki's Translation of

The differences between our two authors will also be noted: in particular, it will be demonstrated that the horoscopy of Wan Minying was Dorothean in character, whereas that of Lilly was Ptolemaic.

Wan Minying and Lilly were arguably some of the foremost astrologers of their times. The former produced the largest extant text in Chinese on horoscopy. With respect to the latter, Geneva remarks that “all recent work on seventeenth century astrology and many conventional histories of the period now give pride of place to William Lilly.” She also remarks that he “must have had a knack amounting to genius for the art, eventually eclipsing all other astrologers of his day.”³ Lilly is a prime candidate to whom we might compare Wan Minying, given his acclaim in English history, as well as the accessibility and breadth of his work.

Lilly was born in Diseworth before going to London at the age of seventeen. It was there that an almanac prompted an interest in astrology, after which time he sought the instruction of a certain John Evans. Lilly around 1635 started to take on clients of his own. He spent the rest of his life as a professional astrologer, rising to great eminence in the country, and offering consultations to the aristocracy and commoners alike.⁴ Lilly was an heir to an astrological tradition that had become increasingly accessible to commoners in previous times throughout Europe. North remarks that “the introduction of printing brought with it new possibilities for the enticement of the public by astrological means.” Such printed works appear in the fifteenth century.⁵ Lilly’s *Christian Astrology* was also printed.⁶

Comparatively fewer details are known about Wan Minying. He received his *jinshi* 進士 title (the highest scholastic accreditation in imperial China) during the civil service examinations of 1550. He served in various government offices

Cardano’s Commentaries on Ptolemy’s *Tetrábiblos*,” *Sino-Western Cultural Relations Journal* 23 (2001): 50–79; Shi Yunli and Zhu Haohao, “Calculating the Fate of Chinese Dynasties with the Islamic Method: The Chinese Study and Application of Arabic Astrology in the 17th Century,” *Micrologus: Nature, Sciences and Medieval Societies* 24 (2016): 311–335; Han Qi 韓琦, “From Adam Schall von Bell to Jan Mikołaj Smogulecki: The Introduction of European Astrology in the Late Ming and Early Qing China,” *Monumenta Serica* 59 (2011): 485–490.

3 Ann Geneva, *Astrology and the Seventeenth Century Mind: William Lilly and the Language of the Stars* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 55–56.

4 Patrick Curry, *Prophecy and Power: Astrology in Early Modern England* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 28–33.

5 J. D. North, *Horoscopes and History* (London: The Warburg Institute University of London, 1986), 153.

6 William Lilly, *Christian Astrology: Modestly Treated of in Three Books* (London: Printed by Tho. Brudenell for John Partridge and Humph. Blunden, 1647), <https://books.google.com/books?id=cExRAAAcAAJ>.

thereafter. He produced a work on native Chinese hemerology and divination titled *San ming tonghui* 三命通會 (*Symposium on the Three Fates*). These details are provided in the preface to his *Xingxue dacheng* 星學大成 (*Great Compendium of Star Studies*). Said preface was produced in 1781 by Lu Feichi 陸費墀 (1731–1790), the chief editor of the *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 (*Complete Works of the Four Stores*), an imperially-organized compendium of Chinese works. The aforementioned two works of Wan Mingyong were included therein.

The *Xingxue dacheng* is the focus of the present study. It is thirty fascicles in length, which is fairly substantial. The reprinting of the text in the modern Taiwan Shangwu yinshuguan edition (1983) of the *Siku quanshu* includes two pages of the original woodblock print on a single page, and it runs for 585 pages. Lilly's *Christian Astrology* is approximately 832 pages in length. These two works are therefore comparable in length, although one major difference in the respective approaches of the authors is that Lilly provides detailed introductions to the art of astrology as well as its technical elements, whereas Wan Mingyong seems to assume that the reader is already well-versed in observational astronomy and horoscopy.

Wan Mingyong's work extracts material from multiple sources, usually without citation, and therefore his work is best considered as a sort of compilation, whereas Lilly in his own words often comments upon techniques he himself has employed to good effect, indicating that his writings were based upon his own practice in addition to the works he cites. At the end of his book Lilly provides "A Catalogue of most Astrological Authors now extant, where Printed, and in what year." Many of these books are in Latin, which shows Lilly's connection to the mainland tradition of Latin astrology, although he decided to write in English evidently for an Anglophone audience. In the unpaginated postscript to the catalogue, he remarks, "In a word, some may blame me that I write in English tongue; yet I trust I have offended no man, sith I write in my owne Language." Wan Mingyong, on the other hand, relied exclusively on sources in Literary Chinese, and there is nothing to indicate that he was literate in any foreign language. His prose and comments are also written in Literary Chinese rather than a colloquial dialect.⁷

Moving on, before delving into the works of these two authors, we should first examine the origins of horoscopy, and discuss its eastward and westward spread across the ancient and medieval worlds.

7 Literary Chinese (*wenyan wen* 文言文) was the *written* lingua franca in East Asia until modern times. This is a style of writing that uses archaic forms and grammatical conventions that became increasingly divorced from spoken Chinese dialects over the centuries. This written language is comparable to Latin in Europe or Classical Arabic in the Middle East and Africa.

2 Horoscopy: East and West

The term horoscopy is derived from the Greek *hōroskopos*, meaning the marker of the hour. This term eventually came to denote a table showing the calculated positions of the planets at a given time, such as the hour of a person's birth. The classical art of casting horoscopes and interpreting them according to established astrological lore emerged in Ptolemaic Egypt starting in the second century BCE, although the production of horoscopic tables is attested first in Babylonian sources. Our extant corpus of Babylonian horoscopes range from 410 to 69 BCE.⁸ Horoscopy was developed throughout later centuries by numerous figures, the two most well-known today are Dorotheus of Sidon (first century CE) and Claudius Ptolemy (second century CE). Although horoscopy is generally considered Hellenistic, originally this art was a composite system comprised of Greek, Egyptian, and Mesopotamian elements.⁹

Astrologers generally flourished during the Roman Empire, although astrology was largely lost in western Europe following the collapse of the empire, yet the Iranian cultural sphere retained a strong tradition of astrology, which carried on into the Islamic era. Islamicate astrology, while displaying many of its own innovations, was an heir to the Sassanian Persian traditions of horoscopy. Persian astrology combined Hellenistic and Indian concepts together.¹⁰ Astrology was studied and widely translated from Persian and Greek into Arabic during the Abbasid period under state sponsorship. The result of this was a flourishing of astrology and observational astronomy.¹¹ Horoscopy was reintroduced into medieval Latindom primarily through translations into Latin from Arabic by figures such as Adelard of Bath, Hermann of Carinthia, Robert of Ketton, Plato of Tivoli, Hugo of Santalla, and John of Seville during the twelfth century. The Latin tradition subsequently produced its own

8 For a discussion of Babylonian horoscopes, see Francesca Rochberg, *The Heavenly Writing: Divination, Horoscopy, and Astronomy in Mesopotamian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 98–120.

9 David Pingree, *From Astral Omens to Astrology: From Babylon to Bīkāner* (Rome: Ist. Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente, 1997), 21–29; Nicholas Campion, "More on the Transmission of the Babylonian Zodiac to Greece: The Case of the Nativity Omens and Their Modern Legacy," *ARAM* 24 (2012): 193–201.

10 For a survey of astrology in Islamdom, see Liana Saif, "Islamic Astrology," in *Astrology through History: Interpreting the Stars from Ancient Mesopotamia to the Present*, ed. William Burns (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio, 2018), 176–185.

11 Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early 'Abbāsid Society (2nd–4th/8th–10th centuries)* (London: Routledge, 1998), 108–110.

authors.¹² Latin astrology was the foundation from which European astrologers, such as Lilly, arose.

Iranian traditions were also transmitted into China starting around the year 800. China in earlier centuries had already received Indian types of astrology, primarily but not limited to Buddhist sources. Buddhism in India generally affirmed the validity of astrology and interacted with it in a number of complex ways over the centuries. This type of Indian astrology was based upon the Moon relative to twenty-seven or twenty-eight lunar stations (*nakṣatras*), which strictly speaking was not horoscopy, since horoscopy requires reference to the zodiac signs.¹³ Horoscopy was first introduced and promoted by figures such as Li Miqian 李彌乾 (fl. 785–805) from “Western India” and the Chinese statesman Li Xuchong 李虛中 (762–813). In light of the Sogdian loanwords and other Iranian elements that we observe in Chinese horoscopic literature of the ninth century, it is certain that horoscopy was transmitted into China from Iranian rather than Indian sources.¹⁴ The specific school of horoscopy that became popularized from this time was Dorothean and based upon a non-extant work titled *Duli yusi jing* 都利聿斯經 (**Dorotheus*).¹⁵

One interesting fact that highlights the link between the Near East and China is the name for Saturn that first appears in Chinese in the year 759, when the first recension of the *Xiuyao jing* 宿曜經 (*Sūtra of Nakṣatras and Planets*), a manual of nominally Buddhist astrology, was produced by Amoghavajra 不空 (705–774) and his team (the text was subsequently revised in 764). In the recension from 759, a list of names of the planets is provided in Chinese, Sogdian, Persian, and Sanskrit, so that the reader could inquire after the day of the week from non-Chinese communities who observed the seven-day week (this custom of the week was still largely unknown to the Chinese). On that list we see *zhi huan* 枳浣, which is a transliteration of Sogdian Kēwān.¹⁶ This Sogdian word was later transliterated using other characters, such as *ji*

12 Lynn Thorndike, “John of Seville,” *Speculum* 34, no. 1 (1959): 23; Charles Burnett, “Astrology,” in *Medieval Latin: An Introduction and Bibliographical Guide*, ed. F. A. C. Mantello and A. G. Rigg (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 371. For an extensive treatment of this topic, see Charles Burnett, *Arabic Into Latin in the Middle Ages: The Translators and Their Intellectual and Social Context* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 59–78.

13 For a discussion of astrology and the deterministic premise of this art within Indian Buddhism, see Jeffrey Kotyk, “Astrological Determinism in Indian Buddhism,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 41 (2018): 145–167.

14 Jeffrey Kotyk, “Iranian Elements in Late-Tang Buddhist Astrology,” *Asia Major* 30, no. 1 (2017): 43–55.

15 See Mak, “*Yusi Jing*,” 128–130.

16 See the Japanese typeset edition of the *Xiuyao jing* edited by Wakita Bunshō 脇田文紹, “*Sukuyō kyō*” *shukusatsu* 宿曜經縮刷, 2 vols. (Nagoya: Wakita Bunshō, 1897), 2:23.

nuan 鷄暖.¹⁷ Sogdian *Kēwān* itself is a transliteration of *Kēwān* from Middle Persian (Pahlavī). Middle Persian *Kēwān*, in turn, is derived from Old Persian **Kayvānu*, which was phonetically adopted from Akkadian *Kajamānu*.¹⁸

Unlike the other names of the planets to which the Iranians assigned their own deities as functional equivalents for the Mesopotamian ones, *Kajamānu* is not the name of a divinity, but rather is a technical term meaning “the permanent” or “the steady.”¹⁹ The Chinese phonetic transliteration of *Kēwān* therefore constitutes a third generation Akkadian loanword that managed to enter Middle Chinese (and later Japanese) from a line of transmission running back to Sogdian, Persian, and then Akkadian. In fact, this is perhaps the only example of an Akkadian loanword in Chinese. Another stunning fact related to this point is that the icon of Saturn-*Kēwān* in China of the Iranian-Mesopotamian type was based upon none other than the Greco-Egyptian motif of Kronos that was transmitted into China via Iranian intermediaries around the year 800.²⁰

Given the Iranian heritage of both Islamicate and Chinese types of horoscopy, it is unsurprising to see common features in these traditions of astrology, such as the use of nine planets, namely the Sun, Moon, five visible planets (Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto were unknown in premodern times), *Rāhu* (Latin: Draco or Caput), and *Ketu* (Latin: Cauda).²¹ The latter two in horoscopy are generally the ascending and descending nodes of the Moon. This pair is also envisioned as the Head and Tail of a Dragon. Iranian, Islamicate, Chinese, and European astrologers all understood this pair in the same fashion as the head and tail of a figurative creature sprawling across the sky.²²

17 T 1308, 21: 427c9.

18 Antonio Panaino, “Cosmologies and Astrology,” in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Zoroastrianism*, ed. Michael Strausberg and Yuhān Sohrab-Dinshaw Vevaina (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 253.

19 I became aware of this fact after communicating on the matter with Antonio Panaino (11 January 2019). See also D. N. MacKenzie, “Zoroastrian Astrology in the *Bundahišn*,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 27, no. 3 (1964): 520, fn. 46.

20 Jeffrey Kotyk, “Astrological Iconography of Planetary Deities in Tang China: Near Eastern and Indian Icons in Chinese Buddhism,” *Journal of Chinese Buddhist Studies* 30 (2017): 55–58, esp. image plate 8.

21 The second century BCE Greek astronomer Hipparchus might have observed Uranus long before its official discovery by William Herschel (1738–1822) on March 13th, 1781, but even if it were observed in antiquity, it was not recognized as a planet. See René Bourtembourg, “Was Uranus Observed by Hipparchus?” *Journal for the History of Astronomy* 44, no. 4 (2013): 377–387.

22 Sara Kuehn, “The Eclipse Demons *Rāhu* and *Ketu* in Islamic Astral Sciences,” in *In Umbra: демонология как семиотическая система, выпуск 5* [Demonology as a semiotic system, no. 5], ed. D. Antonov and O. Khristoforova (Moscow: Indrik, 2016), 203–235; Kotyk, “Astrological Iconography,” 59–60.

This motif of a Head and Tail also appears in the work of Lilly. He writes, "The Head of the Dragon in Masculine, of the nature of ♂ and ♀, and of himselfe a Fortune; yet the Ancients doe say, that being in ♂ [conjunction] with evill Planets they account him evill."²³ Wan Minying, however, offers a different interpretation: "Rāhu is the star of the Celestial Head, belonging to an essence of fire [Mars]."²⁴

Lilly was primarily interested in the seven planets. He lists them in the classical fashion (the Chaldean ordering: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sol, Venus, Mercury, Luna).²⁵ Wan Minying utilized the aforementioned nine planets, plus two others. Chinese horoscopy from its beginning during the ninth century utilized a system of eleven planets: namely, the seven visible planets, the two nodes, and Yuebei 月孛 and Ziqi 紫氣. Yuebei is the lunar apogee treated as a planet, much in the same way as the lunar nodes. Ziqi is a moving point along the ecliptic that tracks intercalation (the insertion of intercalary months). The latter two planets are not attested outside of China, although they originated from abroad. The lunar apogee was never treated as a planet in classical or medieval types of horoscopy, either in Latindom or Islamdom, but the function of the apogee was understood during Antiquity by astronomers, such as Hipparchus and Ptolemy.²⁶

We should note that Niu Weixing argues that the early formation of the concept of eleven planets can be dated to around the Five Dynasties and Northern Song (tenth century). He notes that throughout the Song period, the eleven planets appear in Daoist literature, in addition to their images being painted at both Daoist and Buddhist venues. He suggests it is quite likely that this concept was formulated by native Chinese astrologers atop the earlier nine planets (*navagraha*).²⁷ I disagree with this thesis, and have argued in an earlier study that the eleven planets are of non-Chinese provenance upon the basis of three factors: namely, their mathematical parameters, the historical account that

23 Lilly, *Christian Astrology*, 83.

24 羅喉為天首星，配屬火之精。SKQS 809: 690b12–13.

25 Lilly, *Christian Astrology*, 25. These are ordered from slowest to fastest moving from a geocentric perspective.

26 Kotyk, "The Sinicization of Indo-Iranian Astrology," 75–79; David Leverington, *Babylon to Voyager and Beyond: A History of Planetary Astronomy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 51.

27 Niu Weixing 鈕卫星, "Cong 'Luo, Ji' dao 'Siyu': Wailai tianwen gainian hanhua zhi yi li" 从 '罗、计' 到 '四余': 外来天文概念汉化之一例, *Shanghai Jiaotong daxue xuebao zhexue shehui kexue ban* 上海交通大学学报哲学社会科学版 6 (2010): 53.

Li Miqian introduced them, and the icon of Yuebei, which corresponds to the Iranian deity Āl (Albasti).²⁸

Moving on, horoscopy in Latindom was considered to comprise several divisions, a convention that is well known through the work titled *Speculum astronomiae* (*Mirror of Astronomy*) attributed to Albertus Magnus (d. 1280).²⁹ The first is general or mundane astrology, which deals with the fate of countries and regions. Natal or genethliacal astrology deals with the casting of birth charts. These indicate the positions of planets at the time of a person's birth (the person in question is called the "native"). Electional or katarchic astrology attempts to determine the most astrologically auspicious time to carry out an act, such as starting out on a journey or carrying out a wedding ceremony. Horary astrology involves asking a question and casting a chart for that moment from which judgements are made. Albertus also discussed a branch of astrology that deals with the production of astrological talismans (*imagines*). Medical astrology is another division, but one omitted by Albertus.³⁰

European astrologers practiced all these types of astrology, but Wan Mingyong's *Xingxue dacheng* is primarily concerned with natal astrology. In fact, my survey of extant horoscopic literature and horoscopes from both China and Japan would indicate that East Asian astrologers were primarily concerned with natal astrology, although the other divisions outlined above are still to be found with the exception of horary astrology. A systematic breakdown of astrology into various branches similar to Albertus, however, is not evident in East Asia. Moreover, although electional astrology was quite prominent in the West, this was not so in East Asia, where one of the main ways of determining auspicious times to carry out acts—apart from reference to native Chinese calendrical conventions—was through using the seven-day week, which itself is originally a Greco-Egyptian religious calendar that spread to South and East Asia. Use of the seven-day week for this purpose does not require reference to planetary configurations (apart from observation of the Sun's passage), and

28 Kotyk, "The Sinicization of Indo-Iranian Astrology," 19–20, 75–79; Kotyk, "Astrological Iconography of Planetary Deities," 60–64.

29 The traditionally attributed authorship of this work is contested. Hackett explains that "the authorship of the *Speculum astronomiae* is still a live issue, and while the burden of the historical evidence now seems to rule out Albert as the author, one cannot rule out the possibility that the author of this work was or even had been in contact with the major scholars on the topic of astronomy/astrology at this time, including Albert." Jeremiah Hackett, "Albert the Great and the *Speculum astronomiae*: The State of the Research at the Beginning of the 21st Century," in *A Companion to Albert the Great: Theology, Philosophy, and the Sciences*, ed. Irvn M. Resneck (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 448–449.

30 Burnett, "Astrology," 375–376.

therefore is a type of hemerology (the art of determining auspicious days according to calendrical conventions), rather than horoscopy.

The ordering of the seven-day week brought together the Egyptian belief in gods presiding over each of the twenty-four hours and the Greek concept of concentric spheres surrounding the Earth. These spheres are arranged descending order of Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury, and the Moon. The first hour of the first day at sunrise is assigned to Saturn, the second hour to Jupiter, the third to Mars, etc. Finally, the twenty-fifth hour (the first hour of the second day) is assigned to the Sun, and the forty-ninth hour is assigned to the Moon (hence, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, etc.). This ordering was known in the second century BCE, around the time when horoscopy was being developed in Ptolemaic Egypt.³¹ Lilly also observed the astrological conventions of planetary hours and the seven-day week.³²

Having outlined the relevant history of horoscopy, we will now proceed into a discussion of a specific doctrine that was of critical importance to Lilly and Wan Mingying.

3 The Twelve Houses

Mesopotamian astronomy originally divided the ecliptic and celestial equator into 360 degrees. This was further divided into the twelve sections that we know as the zodiac signs in the order of Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, and Pisces. The ecliptic is the band of space in the sky through which the Sun travels over the course of one year from a geocentric perspective. From a heliocentric perspective, the Earth and other planets revolve around the Sun along the plane of the solar system. This plane from Earth is perceived to be the ecliptic. The planets therefore appear to all move through the ecliptic and nowhere else in the sky.

Astrologers in Egypt divided the ecliptic into four static quadrants (cardines). Later, another system of twelve static divisions was devised. Unlike the zodiac signs, which rise and set, these twelve divisions are static. Greenbaum and Ross state, “The τόπος system begins with the sign of the ascendant and includes its whole sign within the τόπος, with each subsequent place also

31 Yano Michio, “Calendar, Astrology, and Astronomy,” in *The Blackwell Guide to Hinduism*, ed. Gavin Flood (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 383.

32 Lilly, *Christian Astrology*, 482–485.

including the whole zodiac sign.”³³ In other words, the eastern horizon is designated as the first of these (the ascendant), while the seventh (running in a counter-clockwise fashion) is the western horizon (the descendant). These twelve divisions were called the twelve “places” (Greek τόποι, Latin *loci*). In Middle Persian they were similarly called *gyāg* (place).³⁴ This doctrine was known to Lilly as the Twelve Houses. As we will see in Chinese, this doctrine is called the twelve “places” or “houses/palaces” (*shī’er wei* 十二位 and *shī’er gong* 十二宮 respectively). For ease of reference, I will refer to this doctrine as Twelve Houses, especially since in Chinese the term is more often represented by *gong* 宮.

Each of the Twelve Houses signify specific themes, related to matters such as life, death, family, estate, etc. The planets and the zodiac signs which occupy them activate those themes in either agreeable or disagreeable ways, as we will see below. The zodiac signs themselves are each ruled by a planet, and thus in a natal chart the ruler of the zodiac sign occupying a House becomes the ruler of that House. This doctrine of the Twelve Houses was universally employed across all traditions of horoscopy throughout the classical and medieval periods, and it arguably constitutes the most essential and common element of horoscopy in general.

The first datable reference to the Twelve Houses in China is in a Chinese Buddhist text titled *Qiyao rangzai jue* 七曜攘災決 (T 1308), i.e., the *Secrets of Seven-Planet Apotropaism*, which dates to 806–865.³⁵ The Twelve Houses are also mentioned in the fragmentary chapters of the extant *Lingtai jing* 靈臺經 (DZ 288), the *Scripture of the Spiritual Terrace*, a Daoist manual of horoscopy that dates to sometime during the ninth century.³⁶ The names of Twelve Houses in the *Qiyao rangzai jue* are given in table 1.

The doctrine of the Twelve Houses was again explained in a work of Islamicate astrology, *al-Madkhal* by Kūšyār ibn Labbān (971–1029), or Kuoshi Ya’er 闊識牙耳 in Chinese transliteration, which was translated into Chinese as the *Mingyi tianwen shu* 明譯天文書 (*Book of Astronomy Translated in the Ming*)

33 Dorian Gieseler Greenbaum and Micah T. Ross, “The Role of Egypt in the Development of the Horoscope,” in *Egypt in Transition: Social and Religious Development of Egypt in the First Millennium BCE*, ed. Ladislav Bareš, Filip Coppens, and Kveta Smoláriková (Prague: Czech Institute of Egyptology, 2010), 173.

34 MacKenzie, “Zoroastrian Astrology,” 523, fn. 59; D. N. MacKenzie, *A Concise Pahlavi Dictionary* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 38.

35 Kotyk, “Iranian Elements in Late-Tang Buddhist Astrology,” 39–48.

36 Kotyk, “The Sinicization of Indo-Iranian Astrology,” 16.

TABLE 1 Twelve Houses in the *Qiyao rangzai jue*

	Directional assignment	Theme
I	Mao 卯 [East]	Life 命位
II	Yin 寅	Wealth 財物
III	Chou 丑	Brothers 兄弟
IV	Zi 子 [North]	Estate 田宅
V	Hai 亥	Children 男女
VI	Xu 戌	Servants 僮僕
VII	You 酉 [West]	Marriage 夫妻
VIII	Shen 申	Illness 疾病
IX	Wei 未	Travel 遷移
X	Wu 午 [South]	Rank 官祿
XI	Si 巳	Fortune 福德
XII	Chen 辰	Distress 困窮

under the emperor Hongwu 洪武 (r. 1368–1398). The original work in Arabic was based heavily upon the *Tetrabiblos* by Ptolemy.³⁷

The Twelve Houses were still in extensive use during the sixteenth century in China. The sixth fascicle of the *Xingxue dacheng* discusses them at length. Wan Minying specifically cites, among other sources, a work titled “Discussion on the Twelve Places” (*shi'er wei lun* 十二位論) from a “Hall of the Zither” (*Qin tang* 琴堂), which elsewhere (fascicle twenty-four) he identifies as the name of a monk (*heshang* 和尚), speculating that this was Chan Master Yixing 一行 (673–727) of the Tang. Yixing was a prominent court astronomer, Buddhist monk, and reformer of the state calendar, but in later centuries a number of works on astrology and astral magic were attributed to him, leading to the emergence of what I call a pseudo-Yixing. This fictional figure constituted a legend entirely divorced from the historical man.³⁸ Wan Minying also discusses the Twelve Houses as they specifically relate to the aforementioned eleven planets between fascicles fourteen to twenty-two.

We will now turn to a comparison of the explanations of the Twelve Houses by Lilly and Wan Minying with the aim of determining their common features and differences. This will reveal some conceptual divergences that occurred

37 See sections 1.20.1–1.20.14 in Yano, *Kūshyār ibn Labbā's Introduction to Astrology*, 271.
38 SKQS 806: 752b6–7; Jeffrey Kotyk, “Yixing and Pseudo-Yixing: A Misunderstood Astronomer-Monk,” *Journal of Chinese Buddhist Studies* 31 (2018): 30–31.

in Europe and China. It will also show that both authors utilized the Twelve Houses in largely similar ways.

4 The First House

Lilly states, “It is called the Ascendant, because when the ☉ cometh to the cusp of this house, he ascends, or then ariseth, and is visible in our Horizon.” Lilly also explains that the First House “has signification of the life of man, of the stature, colour, complexion, form, and shape of him that propounds the question, or is born.”³⁹

Similarly, Wan Minying explains, “Astrologers past and present have regarded the Sun as the place from which fate emerges. Since the Sun emerges from *mao* [east], the positioning of a person’s fate is also in *mao*.”⁴⁰ Wan Minying here is referring to the ascendant, although in Chinese *mao* is both a directional marker and unit of time (a “double-hour”) representing 05:00–07:00. *Mao* is the time of day when the Sun is positioned in that section of the ecliptic (see fig. 1). Wan Minying notes that the true rising position of the Sun can be earlier or later depending upon the time of the year, since daylight hours change according to the seasons. This is a somewhat crude way of determining the ascendant in comparison to astrologers elsewhere in Eurasia and Africa, who measured the exact degree of the zodiac sign rising at the ascendant with precise consideration of latitude.

Here we should note that in the year 718, knowledge of the concept of geographical latitude was, in fact, transmitted into China through the translation of the **Navagraha-karaṇa* (*Jiuzhi li* 九執曆), which was produced in 718 by Gautama Siddhārtha (Jutan Xida 瞿曇悉達; dates unknown) from Sanskrit. This is a manual of mathematical astronomy largely based upon an earlier transmission of Hellenistic astronomy that had been established and further developed in India. Latitude in this text is called *suifang yan fa* 隨方眼法 (“method according to the location of the observer”), which is a direct translation of the Sanskrit *sva-deśa-akṣa*.⁴¹ Although this text provides scientific proofs in support of a spherical earth, Chinese astronomers at the time and throughout the rest of the medieval period ignored this, and continued to use

39 Lilly, *Christian Astrology*, 50–51.

40 星家源流以太陽為命之所自出，太陽出卯故，人之立命亦在卯。SKQS 809: 397b5–6.

41 SKQS 807: 942b10. See translation and commentary in Yabuuchi Kiyoshi 薮内清, *Zōtei ZuiTō rekihō shi no kenkyū* 增訂隋唐曆法史の研究 (Kyōto: Rinsen Shoten, 1989), 40.

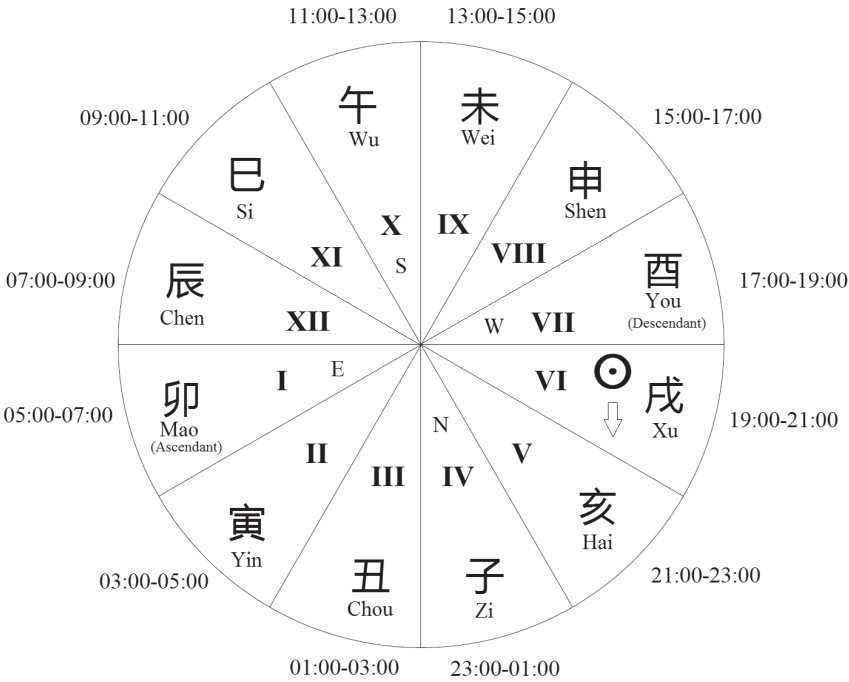


FIGURE 1 Twelve Houses and earthly branches

flat-earth cosmology. This accurate method of calculating latitude was therefore never adopted by the court or Chinese astrologers as far as we know. The production of horoscopes by Chinese astrologers therefore did not account for latitude, and thus no consideration was given to long and short ascension times of the zodiac signs.

Tang-era horoscopy from its inception, and all later Chinese astrologers including Wan Mingyong, understood the First House as signifying *ming* 命, which can be interpreted as life, soul, spirit, or fate. The Chinese term was likely translated around the year 800 from Middle Persian *gyānān*, referring to soul, although *ming* in Chinese usage tends to denote fate or life.⁴²

Planets occupying the First House signify various things, such as personality traits, physical features of the native (i.e., the person for whom the horoscope was cast), fortunes in life, and even the potential for specific diseases. Such interpretations for each of the planets can vary considerably from author to author, but generally themes associated with each planet are consistent. For

42 Kotyk, “Iranian Elements in Late-Tang Buddhist Astrology,” 45; MacKenzie, “Zoroastrian Astrology,” 526.

instance, Lilly explains that “when ♄ is but moderately well fortified, in this house, and in any benevolent aspect of ♄, ♀, ☉ or ♃, it promiseth a good sober constitution of body, and usually long life.”⁴³ Saturn is a malefic planet, but Saturn positioned in a favorable configuration to other planets as explained here might signify agreeable Saturnine qualities, such as longevity.

Wan Mingyong similarly states that Saturn in the First House conjunct with Venus (a benefic planet) signifies long life and virtuous cultivation.⁴⁴ Saturn, nevertheless, is a malefic planet, and so elsewhere he explains that “Saturn in the House of Fate indicates dullness [of mind]. We could not explain [how unfortunate it would be] should the person be born at night.”⁴⁵ The latter line is in reference to the doctrine of sect (Greek: *hairesis*), which features prominently in Hellenistic astrology.⁴⁶ This doctrine also features prominently in Islamicate and Chinese traditions of horoscopy, although it fell out of use in European traditions. In the present context, Saturn is a diurnal planet (i.e., a planet that favors daytime), thus one would expect severely unfavorable significations should Saturn be found in the First House in a nocturnal chart.

5 The Second House

Lilly explains that the Second House concerns “the estate or fortune of him that asks the Question, of his Wealth or Poverty, of all moveable Goods, Money lent, of Profit or gaine, losse or damage.” He further explains, “It hath Consignificators of ♄ and ☿; for if ♄ be placed in this house, or be Lord hereof, it’s an argument of an estate or fortune; ☉ and ☿ are never well placed in this house, either of them show dispersion of substance ...”⁴⁷

Wan Mingyong refers to this House as “Money & Silk” (*caibo gong* 財帛宮), which essentially refers to assets and material fortunes. Tang-era sources also associate the Second House with wealth.

43 Lilly, *Christian Astrology*, 51.

44 與金相逢長命修雅. SKQS 809: 595b6–7.

45 土星入命主頑鈍, 夜裏生人不可論. SKQS 809: 407b14.

46 The seven planets are categorized as either diurnal or nocturnal. When a planet is out of its preferred time of day, its significations become weaker or, in the case of malefics, especially unfavorable. The Sun, Jupiter, and Saturn are diurnal. The Moon, Venus, and Mars are nocturnal. Mercury is neutral. See Dorian Gieseler Greenbaum, *The Daimon in Hellenistic Astrology: Origins and Influence* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 403–404; Giuseppe Bezza, “The Development of an Astrological Term—from Greek *hairesis* to Arabic *hayyiz*,” *Culture and Cosmos* 11, no. 1–2 (2007): 252.

47 Lilly, *Christian Astrology*, 51–52.

Jupiter, a benefic planet, signifies bounty. In a similar manner to Lilly, Wan Mingyong cites a text that reads, “They will certainly prosper if Jupiter is in [the House of] assets.”⁴⁸ Wan Mingyong would also seem to agree with Lilly about the Sun and Mars in the Second House. With respect to the Sun, “In their early years there will be much destruction [of wealth], while in the middle and late years it will become auspicious. It indicates holding an eminent position. If conjunct with Jupiter, then there will be the most wealth, whereas in this sign conjunct with Mercury there will be its loss.”⁴⁹ With respect to Mars, “There will be dispersal [of wealth] in their early years, like a lotus that will tilt over as soon as it is full of water. They will often garner praise and scorn. If an auspicious star [benefic planet] is conjunct in the same sign, then the inauspiciousness is reversed to auspicious.”⁵⁰

The concept of consignificators does not appear in any Chinese source of which I am aware. In this doctrine each House is assigned one of the planets as a consignificator, the ordering of which is Chaldean, hence the first is associated with Saturn, the second with Jupiter, the third with Mars, etc. The zodiac signs commencing with Aries are also assigned to the House, hence Aries is associated with the First, Taurus with the Second, Gemini with the Third, etc.

6 The Third House

Lilly states that this House “hath signification of Brethern, Sisters, Cozens or Kindred, Neighbours, small Journeys, or inland-Journeys, oft removing from one place to another, Epistles, Letters, Rumours, Messengers.”⁵¹ The Third House in Chinese horoscopy, in contrast to this, generally only signifies siblings and no other themes. Wan Mingyong also remarks that “[the House of] brothers only discusses their harmony or disharmony. Now people often love asking about the number of brothers.”⁵²

Concerning this House, Lilly writes, “It hath Consignificators, of the Signes ♀, of the Planets ♂, which is one reason why ♂ in this house, unlesse joyned with ♀ is not very unfortunate, it is a Cadent house, and is the joy of the ♀, for

48 木臨財帛必豐隆. SKQS 80g: 408b9.

49 初年多破, 中末方吉. 主居貴位. 同木財最多. 此宮同水主失脫. SKQS 80g: 642a1–2. See Kotyk, “The Sinicization of Indo-Iranian Astrology,” 64.

50 初年耗散, 有似蓮花, 貯水纔滿必傾. 多招是非. 若有吉星合照同宮, 則反凶成吉. SKQS 80g: 579b11.

51 Lilly, *Christian Astrology*, 52.

52 兄弟只論其和睦與不和睦. 今人多愛問幾兄弟. SKQS 80g: 401b16.

if she be posited therein, especially in a moveable Signe, it's an argument of much travell, trotting and trudging, or of being seldome quiet."

As noted earlier, Wan Mingying was apparently unaware of the concept of consignificators. According to him, Mars in the House of Brothers "indicates that although their brothers will be numerous, in the end after a long time they will never gain power [on account of their brothers]."⁵³ This is an unfavorable prediction. He also notes in this respect, "[The native] will be of a solitary nature."⁵⁴ The Moon according to him, however, is favorable in this House: "Of their brothers, [the native] will be able to retain the power of one or two of them."⁵⁵

7 The Fourth House

Concerning the Fourth House, Lilly writes the following:

Giveth Judgment of Fathers in general, and ever of his Father that enquires, or that is borne; of Lands, Houses, Tenements, Inheritances, Tillage of the earth, Treasures hidden, the determination or end of anything; Townes, Cities or Castles, besieged or not besieged; all ancient Dwellings, Gardens, Fields, Pastures, Orchards; the quality and nature of the ground ... whether Vineyards, Cornfields, &c. whether the ground be Woody, Stony or barren.⁵⁶

The Fourth House in China is generally called "House of Fields and Abode" (*tian zhai gong* 田宅宮), which effectively refers to one's estate and ancestral holdings (it is best translated as House of Estate). Wan Mingying also notes, "[The House of] Estate is also the House of Parents."⁵⁷ However, this House in Chinese horoscopy predominately concerns an individual's estate and inheritance, rather than the state of the father.

In classical horoscopy, the Sun represents the father, hence Lilly argues, "In Nativities or Questions, this Fourth House represents Fathers, so doth the ☉ by day and ☿ by night; yet if the ☉ be herein placed, he is not ill, but rather shewes the Father to be of a noble disposition, &c." The association between the

53 火照主有兄弟雖多終久全不得力。SKQS 809: 580a4.

54 獨行處性也。SKQS 809: 580a3.

55 月照主兄弟可保一二人之力。SKQS 809: 657a4-5.

56 Lilly, *Christian Astrology*, 52-53.

57 田宅亦為父母宮。SKQS 809: 402a11.

Sun and the father originally stems from Hellenistic astrology.⁵⁸ Wan Minying agrees with this, stating that the Sun “is the place of the father.”⁵⁹

Wan Minying appears to cite two sources concerning the Sun in the Fourth, the first of which states that this “indicates that they [the native] will obtain wealth from their parents; first they will destroy their ancestral [estate] and later establish themselves. They will acquire fields and manors external [to their family]. They will only be able to flourish in their later years.”⁶⁰ The other line reads, “The Sun illuminating [this House] indicates an eminent household, and greatly bringing about industry within the estate.”⁶¹ Again, we observe here an emphasis upon what becomes of the inherited estate or family holdings of the native, rather than the status of the father.

Wan Minying’s material regards the position of the Sun itself, rather than any House, as indicating the state of the father, hence he states that if the Sun is conjunct “with a nocturnal Saturn or diurnal Mars, it indicates the ruin of the father; [a conjunction with] the Tail or Head [Ketu or Rāhu] indicates a terrible death of the father.”⁶²

8 The Fifth House

Concerning the Fifth House, Lilly explains, “By this house we judge of Children, of Embassadors, of the state of a Woman with child, of Banquets, of Ale-houses, Tavernes, Playes, Messengers or Agents of Republicks...” Chinese horoscopy similarly calls the Fifth House as the “House of Sons and Daughters” (*nan nü gong* 男女宮), although the other themes mentioned by Lilly here are not apparent in Chinese literature. The Fifth House in Chinese horoscopy deals exclusively with children.

Lilly suggests with respect to this House that “it’s wholly unfortunate by ♂ or ♀, and they therein shew disobedient children and untoward.”⁶³ Concerning Mars and Saturn specifically, Wan Minying writes, “Mars shall not gain this ground, for if meeting [with this configuration], there will definitely be no worse absence [of children than this]. If Saturn alights in the fifth, [children]

58 Greenbaum, *The Daimon in Hellenistic Astrology*, 148.

59 父之所. SKQS 80g: 632a2.

60 主得父母財物, 先破祖後自成, 招外田庄, 末年方可旺盛. SKQS 80g: 642ba1–2. See also Kotyk, “The Sinicization of Indo-Iranian Astrology,” 64.

61 日照, 主高貴宅舍, 大招田宅產業. SKQS 80g: 642b3.

62 夜土晝火, 主父殘疾, 尾首主父惡死. SKQS 80g: 633a1.

63 Lilly, *Christian Astrology*, 53.

will be had after much time. If a nocturnal birth, [the native] will definitely be lonely [without children].”⁶⁴ Again, here we see the doctrine of sect utilized to make a critical judgment: if Saturn (a diurnal planet) is out of his favored sect, the prediction shifts from having children late in life to having no children at all.

9 The Sixth House

Concerning the Sixth House, Lilly states, “It concerneth Men and Maid-servants, Gallislaves, Hogges, Sheep, Goats, Hares, Connies, all manner of lesser Cattle, and profit and losse got thereby....” Wan Mingying and Chinese horoscopy call this the “House of Slaves” (*nu pu gong* 奴僕宮), although this House can also signify animals in the possession of the native. For instance, Wan Mingying states, “Mercury [in this House] signifies that slaves and horses during one’s middle years will abscond.”⁶⁵

The Sixth House generally signifies unfavorable developments. Wan Mingying explains, “The Sixth House is called evil and weak. The five stars must not alight therein, for if any of them alight in this House, fortunes and wealth will dissipate day by day.”⁶⁶

Lilly further states that “♂ rejoyceth in his house.” This is in reference to the doctrine of planetary joys, which was widely used in Hellenistic as well as Ancient Roman traditions of horoscopy.⁶⁷ Firmicus Maternus, an astrologer from the mid-4th century CE, wrote a Latin work on horoscopy titled *Mathesis* (334–337 CE). With respect to “Sextus locus in VI,” he writes “Qui locus Mala fortuna appellatur ob hoc, quia locus est Martis.”⁶⁸ That is to say, the sixth place or *locus* (House) is called the “the place of bad fortune, since it is the place of Mars.”

64 火在此宮不得地，遇著定來更莫窮：土臨第五遲遲有，夜生決定主孤蹤。SKQS 809: 410a8–9.

65 水主有奴僕鞍馬中年走失。SKQS 809: 403b10.

66 第六宮中號惡弱，五星不得臨照著，一切加臨在此宮，福祿資財日消鑠。SKQS 809: 403b7–8. This has a parallel in the *Xitian yusi jing* 西天聿斯經, a versified version of Dorotheus in Chinese. See translation in Mak, “*Yusi Jing*,” 140.

67 For a detail discussion of this doctrine, see Chris Brennan, “The Planetary Joys and the Origins of the Significations of the Houses and Triplicities,” *International Society for Astrological Research Journal* 42, no. 1 (2013): 27–42.

68 *Iulii Firmici Materni Matheseos libri VIII*, vol. 1, ed. W. Kroll and F. Skutsch (Leipzig: Teubner, 1897), 62.

Despite the importance of the doctrine of planetary joys in classical horoscopy, Wan Mingyong does not appear to be aware of said doctrine, even though it was known in China by his time. This doctrine is first indirectly attested in one Tang-era source: the *Chengxing lingtai miyao jing* 秤星靈臺祕要經 (DZ 289) or *Scripture of the Secret Essentials of the Compass Spiritual Terrace*, a fragmentary Daoist manual of astral magic based upon what were originally Iranian sources in Chinese translation.

The apotropaic ritual prescribed therein for Mars requires that the Martian altar be activated at the hour of *xu* (*xu shi* 續時).⁶⁹ The character *xu* 續 here is a scribal error for *xu* 戌, the latter being an earthly branch (*dizhi* 地支) that in Chinese horoscopy possesses two functions.⁷⁰ First, it is a functional equivalent to Aries, stemming from the association between the twelve Jupiter stations and zodiac signs in China that commenced around the decade of the 720s CE.⁷¹ Second, *xu* represents the WNW direction (also the Sixth House) and by extension the double-hour of 19:00–21:00. The present context is clearly referring to the second function, meaning that this Martian ritual is to be executed when the Sun is positioned in the Sixth House. These details are easily understood with reference to fig. 1 above.

The election of the Martian ritual must be on a Tuesday: *Yunhan ri* 雲漢日, literally “the day of Unxān” (Unxān is the Sogdian name for Mars). This ritual happens when the Sun is positioned in the Sixth House.⁷² Since the Sixth House is the planetary joy of Mars, we can infer that this prescription within the text is an inexplicit reference to the doctrine of planetary joys.

The next datable reference and first definition of planetary joys in extant Chinese horoscopic literature is found in the translation of *al-Madkhal*. The relevant Chinese section (1.17.2) reads, “What are the positions of joy? Mercury’s is in the Ascendant. The Moon’s is in the Third House. Venus’ is in the Fifth House. Mars’ is in the Sixth House. The Sun’s is in the Ninth House. Jupiter’s is in the Eleventh House. Saturn’s is in the Twelfth House. These all constitute the divisions of the Houses of [planetary] joys.”⁷³ Although *al-Madkhal* antedates

69 DZ 288, 5: 30b8.

70 Kotyk, “Astrological Iconography of Planetary Deities,” 49–50.

71 Jeffrey Kotyk, “Early Tantric Hemerology in Chinese Buddhism: Timing of Rituals According to Śubhakarasiṃha and Yixing,” *Canadian Journal of Buddhist Studies* 13 (2018): 17.

72 The term *Yunhan* 雲漢 is a transliteration of Sogdian *Wnx’n*, which itself is a transcription of Middle Persian *Wahrām* (referring to both the planet Mars and deity Wahrām). Mars presides over Tuesday in the seven-day week. See Kotyk, “Iranian Elements in Late-Tang Buddhist Astrology,” 43.

73 Yano, *Kūšyār ibn Labbā’s Introduction to Astrology*, 269.

Wan Minying, it does not appear that he utilized this work to any noticeable extent, although other contemporaries did, in fact, consult it.⁷⁴

Although Wan Minying and Lilly differ with respect to the usage of planetary joys, their understandings of the Sixth House are largely similar.

10 The Seventh House

With respect to the Seventh House, Lilly writes, “It giveth judgement of Marriage, and describes the person inquired after, whether it be Man or Woman ... Wives, Sweethearts; their shape, description, condition, Nobly or ignobly borne.” He also associates this House with fugitives, thieves, and outlaws. He further comments, “♄ or ♀ unfortunate herein, shew ill in Marriage.”⁷⁵ The Seventh House in Chinese is called the “House of Wives and Concubine” (*qi qie gong* 妻妾宮), but within the Chinese context it never relates to thieves, etc.

European and Chinese traditions of horoscopy generally assume male readers and/or clients. Astrologers moreover utilized the Seventh House to exclusively foretell the features of heterosexual unions, be they monogamous or polygamous. Discussion of both male and female homosexual interests and relationships constitutes a component within astrology as far back as the Hellenistic period, such as Dorotheus for instance, although such relationships were not generally discussed in relation to the Seventh House.⁷⁶

Wan Minying agrees that malefics positioned in this House spell misfortune. He explains, “See which planets are positioned within this House. If you see Venus, Jupiter, or Mercury, then it indicates a wife of a beautiful appearance, and harmony [within the marriage]. If you see Mars, Ketu, or [Yue]bei, there will certainly be destruction and harm [in the marriage].”⁷⁷ He further explains that “Mars indicates remarriage. Saturn indicates [that the wife] will possess a coarse voice, be plump and short in appearance, and unbeautiful.”⁷⁸

74 Kotyk, “The Sinicization of Indo-Iranian Astrology,” 47.

75 Lilly, *Christian Astrology*, 54.

76 For a translation of the relevant section in Dorotheus, see Dorotheus of Sidon, *Carmen Astrologicum: The Umar al-Tabari Translation*, trans. and ed. Benjamin N. Dykes (Minneapolis: Cazimi Press, 2017), 132–134.

77 看此宮有何星曜，若見金木水星，則主美貌夫婦和睦，若見火星計字，必然尅破陷害。SKQS 809: 404a1–3.

78 火主重婚。土主重濁肥短貌不佳。SKQS 809: 411a1.

11 The Eighth House

Lilly offers the following explanation of the Eighth House:

The Estate of Men deceased, Death, its quality and nature; the Wils, Legacies and Testaments of Men deceased; Dowry of the Wife, Portion of the Maid, whether much or little, easie to be obtained or with difficulty.... What kinde of Death a Man shall dye; it signifies feare and anguish of Minde. Who shall enjoy or be heire to the Deceased.⁷⁹

Wan Mingyong calls this House the “House of Illness and Distress” (*ji e gong* 疾厄宮). He writes, “The Eighth House is called illness and distress. It is inauspicious to see Ketu, Yuebei, Mars, and Saturn; if they suddenly fall [here], torments will further pile up, and it will be difficult to avoid illness and distress, as well as misfortunes throughout life. A fortunate star [i.e., a benefic] coming shall mitigate [such unfavorable configurations].”⁸⁰

His explanations of this House, as well as the significations of each of the planets in it, are chiefly concerned with pathogenesis, which in effect constitutes a form of astrological medicine utilizing a horoscope to diagnose or predict illness. For instance, “Saturn illuminating [this House indicates] much suffering, diseases of the four limbs and spleen; throughout life it will be taboo to consume quadrupeds; it indicates wind diseases of the head and feet.”⁸¹

Wan Mingyong’s material, however, does not cover matters related to legacies, endowments, or inheritances. The Fourth House, as discussed above, in Chinese horoscopy is the location from which predictions regarding such matters are undertaken.

12 The Ninth House

With respect to this House, Lilly explains as follows:

By this House we give judgement of Voygages or Long journies beyond Seas or Religious men, or Clergy of any kinde, whether Bishops

⁷⁹ Lilly, *Christian Astrology*, 54.

⁸⁰ 第八宮中，號疾厄，忌見計字并火土，忽然陷沒更疊刑，難免疾厄終身禍。如有福星來解免。SKQS 809: 404a9–10.

⁸¹ 土照多患，四肢脾臟之疾，一生忌食四足之物，主頭脚風之疾。SKQS 809: 597a10–12.

or inferiour Ministers; Dreames, Visions, foraigne Countries, of Books, Learning, Church Livings, or Benefices, Advowsions; of the kindred of ones Wife.⁸²

Wan Minying and the *Qiyao rangzai jue* both call the Ninth House the “House of Travel” (*qianyi gong* 遷移宮), but Wan Minying’s explanation relates also to professional mobility (there is no attention paid to ecclesiastical matters in connection to this House however). He states, “Travel signifies [professional] mobility.⁸³ If fortunate stars, such as a delighted Venus, Jupiter, or Ziqi, should alight here, then the lord shall be promoted in office.”⁸⁴ It is evident from this and other parts of the text that Wan Minying was predominately writing with government officers in mind, rather than commoners. His discussions therefore tend to focus on state ranks and offices. In this context, the native is expected to travel when called into office or when gaining a promotion. However, in other contexts, travels for other purposes are mentioned. For instance, “If you see an inauspicious Saturn [Saturn in a nocturnal chart], it often indicates mercantile travel or travelling for study in various places.”⁸⁵

Both authors are also interested in the mode of travel the native might undertake. Lilly predicts the type of transport (by boat, carriage, or on foot) with reference to the elemental associations with the zodiac signs.⁸⁶ These occidental elemental associations, stemming from the Greek theory of elements (earth, water, air, and fire), were not used by Wan Minying. The only reference to the occidental theory of the four elements in Chinese horoscopic literature is found in the translation of *al-Madkhal* (1.11), but it does not appear that Chinese astrologers employed this doctrine. When he does mention the mode of travel, Wan Minying simply refers to the significations of a planet in the Ninth House. For instance, “Mercury illuminating [the Ninth] is unfavorable for travel by boat. There will be the hazards of wind and waves.”⁸⁷

82 Lilly, *Christian Astrology*, 55.

83 *Xing cang* 行藏 is a term derived from the chapter *Shu er* 述而 (7.11) in the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語). The binomial in this context refers to mobility while in office.

84 遷移主行藏, 喜金木炁福星臨之, 主君子遷官. SKQS 809: 404a16. “Delighted” here denotes a favorable positioning of one of these planets.

85 若見忌土多主九流商旅游學. SKQS 809: 404b3.

86 Lilly, *Christian Astrology*, 608.

87 水照不利舟行防, 有風波之險厄. SKQS 809: 628b5–6. Read *fang* 防 as *you* 游.

13 The Tenth House

Lilly explains the Tenth House as follows:

Commonly it personateth Kings, Princes, Dukes, Earles, Judges, prime Officers, Commanders in chiefe, whether in Armies or Townes; all sorts of Magistracy, and Officers in Authority, Mothers, Honour, Preferment, Dignity, Office, Lawyers; the profession or Trade any one useth; it signifies Kingdomes, Empires, Dukedoms, Counties.⁸⁸

Wan Mingyong calls this the “House of Office and Salary” (*guan lu gong* 官禄宮). He explains that if a fortunate star is positioned here, the native will possess much wealth and eminent office(s).⁸⁹ This House in the Chinese context primarily focuses upon professional development, dignity, and authority, as well as the financial benefits derived from these.

Lilly states, “♄ or ♅ usually deny honour, as to persons of quality, or but little esteeme in the world to a vulgar person, not much joy in his Profession, Trade or Mystery, if a Mechanick.”

Wan Mingyong’s work similarly expresses reservations about the presence of Saturn or the descending node (Ketu) in this House. In the case of Saturn here, he explains that “affairs will often be unsettled, however, this is the star of authority. If it alone traverses this House it also indicates complete fulfilment of wealth and status.”⁹⁰ He does, however, also cite another text: “Saturn illuminating [this House] inevitably brings about unforeseen woes whilst in office, on account of distresses connected to written documents.”⁹¹ Similarly, if Ketu is positioned here, then “one’s official remuneration will be late; after forty it will appear.”⁹²

14 The Eleventh House

Concerning the Eleventh House, Lilly writes, “It doth naturally represent Friends and Friendship, Hope, Trust, Confidence, the Praise, or Dispraise of anyone; the Fidelity or falsenesse of Friends....”⁹³

88 Lilly, *Christian Astrology*, 55.

89 第十宮中號官祿。若見善星，多富足貴人職品。SKQS 809: 404b6.

90 事多啾唧，然此乃權柄之星。若獨行此宮，亦主兩全富貴。SKQS 809: 597b9–10.

91 土照，必招官中有不測懷憂，因文書相連之厄。SKQS 809: 597b10–11.

92 食祿遲晚，四十以後方顯達。SKQS 809: 715b10.

93 Lilly, *Christian Astrology*, 56.

The association between the Eleventh and friendship is attested in Hellenistic sources. Valens in *Anthologies* (IX; 153) regards this as “the Place concerning friends and desires and acquisition.” Elsewhere in the *Anthologies* (II; 28), Valens explains, “If the benefics are in the Sign of the Good Daimon, located in their proper places and in their proper places, they make men illustrious and rich from youth.”⁹⁴

This latter explanation is more in line with what we see in Chinese horoscopy. Wan Mingyong calls this the “House of Fortune” (*fude gong* 福德宮). Earlier, during the ninth century, the *Qiyao rangzai jue* calls this “Characteristics of Fortune” (*fu xiang* 福相).⁹⁵ According to Wan Mingyong, this House reflects general fortune and success in life. The power of malefics positioned here in particular disrupt good fortune: “If you see [in this House] Ketu, Yuebei, Mars, or Saturn, there will certainly be many mishaps. It will also often indicate woes within fortune, and insufficiencies in salary. Even if [the native] becomes wealthy, they will frequently be beset with unforeseen insufficiencies.”⁹⁶

15 The Twelfth House

The interpretation of the Twelfth House is the one that differs most significantly between Lilly and Wan Mingyong. In fact, the interpretation that we see in the work of the latter—as well in that of his contemporaries—is actually anomalous in the history of astrology.

Concerning the Twelfth House, Lilly writes the following:

It hath significations of private Enemies, of Witches, great Cattle, as Horses, Oxen, Elephants, &c. Sorrow, Tribulation, Imprisonments, all manner of affliction, self-undoing, &c. and of such men as maliciously undermine their neighbours, or informe secretly against them.⁹⁷

The Twelfth House historically relates to misfortune and hardship. Valens (IX; 153), for instance, regards this place as “concerning enemies, slaves, and afflicting crises.” He also states (II; 27), “If the malefics happen to be in this place,

94 Vettius Valens, *Anthologies*, trans. Mark T. Riley, <https://www.csus.edu/indiv/r/rileymt/Vettius%20Valens%20entire.pdf> (roman numerals refer to book numbers in the *Anthologies*, arabic numerals to page numbers in the pdf-file).

95 T 1308, 21: 428a1.

96 若見計孛火土，必多蹇破，亦多主福中之憂，祿中不足。縱使富豪，常有意外之不足。SKQS 809: 404b12–13.

97 Lilly, *Christian Astrology*, 56.

they will cause great wounds and traumas, especially if they are in their proper face.” The Iranian astrological tradition as represented in the late Zoroastrian *Bundahišn* also calls the Twelfth *dušfarragān* (“the unfortunate”).⁹⁸ Similarly, the earliest datable text on horoscopy in Chinese, the *Qiyao rangzai jue* from the ninth century, calls the twelfth either quandary (*kunqiong* 困窮) or catastrophe (*huohai gong* 禍害宮).⁹⁹

Wan Minying, however, calls this the “House of Characteristics and Appearance” (*xiang mao gong* 相貌宮). This particular Chinese denomination of the Twelfth House is unique, and its origin is uncertain. One might first suspect that *xiang mao* 相貌 was originally a scribal error which was then reproduced in perpetuity, but other contemporary Chinese authors use this same term, and moreover the lore associated with this House concerns physical appearance.¹⁰⁰ For example, Wan Minying writes, “If Mars illuminates [this House], [the native] will be hideous in appearance, and commanding in their speech. They will not submit to the deception of people. They will be loyal and upright in character.”¹⁰¹ Elsewhere in the text, Wan Minying briefly notes that the “ruler of spirit and body [in relation to the House of] Appearance is the ruler of the House of Characteristics and Appearance.”¹⁰²

In light of the fact that classical and medieval authors on horoscopy elsewhere in the world never interpret the Twelfth House in this manner, it is certainly curious that in China we see the Twelfth House associated with appearance. This association seems to have been introduced or developed after the Tang period (post-ninth century), particularly since the medieval Japanese tradition of horoscopy, which faithfully transmitted Tang-era Buddhist astrology, simply called the Twelfth as “catastrophe” (*huohai gong* 禍害), which likely was derived from the *Qiyao rangzai jue*.¹⁰³

98 MacKenzie, *Zoroastrian Astrology*, 526; MacKenzie, *A Concise Pahlavi Dictionary*, 29.

99 T 1308, 21: 428a3 & 428a27.

100 For instance, the *Shendao dabian xiangzong huatian wuxing* 神道大編象宗華天五星 (Great compilation of the divine way: Purports of celestial phenomena, flowering heavens, and the five stars) by Zhou Yun 周雲 (also known as Yuanzi 淵子), produced in 1582, uses the same term in naming the Twelfth House. See x 1031: 268a11.

101 火照, 形相惡醜, 言語剛烈, 不服人欺, 情行忠直. SKQS 809: 582b3–4.

102 貌神體主者, 相貌宮之主也. SKQS 809: 545b13.

103 Momo Hiroyuki, “Sukuyō kanmon shū” 宿曜勘文集, in *Momo Hiroyuki chosakushū* 桃裕行著作集, vol. 8, no. 2, *Rekihō no kenkyū* 暦法の研究, ed. Tsuchida Naoshige (Kyōto: Shibunkaku, 1990), 133, 144. For a discussion of Japanese horoscopy, see Jeffrey Kotyk, “Japanese Buddhist Astrology and Astral Magic: Mikkyō and Sukuyōdō,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 45, no. 1 (2018): 59–70.

16 The Lot of Fortune

The other doctrine under investigation in the present study is the Lot of Fortune. The doctrine of “lots” or “parts” is traced back to Antiquity. This concept in Greek is called *κλῆροι*. According to Greenbaum, “Lots are specific points in the chart found by taking the arc between two planets (or a planet and another point) and projecting it from a third point.”¹⁰⁴ Each lot is assigned a theme, such as fortune, father, death, spirit, or any number of other topics. The zodiac sign unto which the lot falls and the planets within that sign are understood as having some connection to the lot in question.

The Lot of Fortune in a diurnal chart is calculated from the Sun to the Moon (and reverse of this if nocturnal). Dorotheus explains that this Lot “indicates the condition of the wealthy, the middling, and the poor.”¹⁰⁵ Valens (11; 26) calls this lot “the most influential and most potent place.” Lilly, mentioning Ptolemy, also places great emphasis on this lot, which he called the Part of Fortune (following the Latin term *pars fortune*):

Ptolomy [*sic*] doth not more consider a Planet then [*sic*] the *Part of Fortune*, thus charactered ☿; it hath no aspect, but any Planets may cast their aspect unto it. The greatest [r]ule of it, that hitherto I have either read or made of it for, is thus; That if we find it well placed in the heaven, in a good House, or in a good aspect of a Benevolent Planet, we judge the Fortun[e] or estate of the *querent* to be correspondent unto its strength, viz. if it be wel p[r]ofited or in an angle, or in those signs wherein it's fortunated, we judge the estate of the *querent* to be foundand firme, if ☿ is otherwayes placed, we doe the contrary.¹⁰⁶

Wan Mingyong was also aware of this same doctrine and like the aforementioned authors insisted upon its importance:

Fortune is the root of body and spirit. If auspicious stars cluster here, then fortune and longevity will be firm. If wicked planets alight here, then fate will be fleeting. Auspiciousness and misfortune are like echoes. To calculate the House of Fortune: if a diurnal birth, count from the Sun to the Moon. If a nocturnal birth, count from the Moon to the Sun. Calculate

¹⁰⁴ Greenbaum, *The Daimon in Hellenistic Astrology*, 7.

¹⁰⁵ Dorotheus of Sidon, *Carmen Astrologicum*, 109.

¹⁰⁶ Lilly, *Christian Astrology*, 143.

the number of Houses between them and then count that distance off from the Ascendant.¹⁰⁷

Wan Mingying appears to associate the Lot of Fortune with the Eleventh House of Fortune, which stems from both of these being called *fude gong* 福德宮 (“House of Fortune”) in Chinese, although this is anomalous. The Lot of Fortune may or may not fall upon the Eleventh, and its position can vary considerably even among individuals born around the same time due to the rapid velocity of the Moon. Nevertheless, Wan Mingying is still aware that these are separate doctrines.

The primary difference between Wan Mingying and Lilly is that Lilly does not reverse the formula, hence in his reckoning the procedure would still measure from the Sun to the Moon even in a nocturnal chart. Lilly states, “Whether your Figure be by day or night, observe this Method.”¹⁰⁸ Lilly’s formula is derived from Ptolemy’s *Tetrábiblos* (IV.2), in which Ptolemy defines the Lot of Fortune as “the distance from the Sun to the Moon, in both diurnal and nocturnal nativities.”¹⁰⁹ Curiously, *al-Madkhal* (1.21.2) does actually reverse the formula according to sect, even though this text adapted much material from Ptolemy.¹¹⁰

Another notable difference is that Wan Mingying calculates the distance between the Sun and the Moon or vice-versa using whole Houses. He does not mention degree measurements. He also uses the term “House position” (*gong wei* 宮位), which indicates a whole-sign configuration, rather than an exact position based upon degree measurements. Lilly, however, uses exact degree measurements. In other words, Wan Mingying calculates the distance between the two planets based upon the number of Houses separating them, rather than referring to precise degrees. In that case, the Lot of Fortune could fall on different signs according to these two systems. The use of whole-sign configurations here is unsurprising, given that both Chinese and Japanese horoscopy throughout the medieval period used these, rather than degree-based configurations.¹¹¹

107 福德者為身命之根源，吉星聚此，則福壽堅牢，惡曜臨之，則命浮弱，吉凶如響。凡推其福德宮：日生，則從太陽數至太陰。夜生，則從太陰數至太陽。數其相去幾宮，然後從命宮數其相去。SKQS 809: 405a16–b1.

108 Lilly, *Christian Astrology*, 144.

109 Claudius Ptolemy, *Tetrábiblos*, trans. Frank Egleston Robbins (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1940), 373–375.

110 In Yano, *Kūšyār ibn Labbā's Introduction to Astrology*, 63, 271.

111 Kotyk, “The Sinicization of Indo-Iranian Astrology,” 42. For a discussion of House configurations in Antiquity, see Robert Hand, “Signs as Houses (Places) in Ancient Astrology,” *Culture and Cosmos* 11, no. 1–2 (2007): 135–162.

17 Conclusion

Wan Mingyong's presentation of horoscopy, which is essentially a compilation of diverse sources available to him in Chinese stretching back to the ninth century, maintained the integrity of important Hellenistic doctrines that had been transmitted to China via Iranian intermediaries, especially during the ninth century, such as the Twelve Houses and Lot of Fortune, in addition to other key conventions such as sect.

Wan Mingyong depended to a great extent upon the Dorothean transmission of astrology that dates back to around the year 800, as well as the subsequent domestic literature that developed based upon it, although there are features in his work that are unique to China and not attested elsewhere. These include the association of the Twelfth House with appearance, which is otherwise associated with misfortune in classical and medieval systems of horoscopy (Hellenistic, Iranian, Islamicate, and European). Another unique feature is the use of eleven planets. The nine-planet (*navagraha*) system, which includes the two lunar nodes, is attested first in India and thereafter in cultures to the west and east of India, but the additional use of Yuebei and Ziqi is unknown outside the Sinosphere. Yuebei is the lunar apogee, which was known in Antiquity since at least the time of Hipparchus during the second century BCE, but its use as a pseudo-planet is attested exclusively in East Asia.

Despite these curious features, Lilly and Wan Mingyong actually have much in common with regard to their respective interpretations of the Twelve Houses and the Lot of Fortune. In some ways, however, Wan Mingyong is actually more faithful to Hellenistic astrological doctrines than Lilly. Lilly, for example, does not pay attention to the doctrine of sect in the material surveyed above, whereas Wan Mingyong clearly makes a distinction between nocturnal and diurnal configurations. Furthermore, Ptolemy did not reverse the formula for the Lot of Fortune, but this was irregular in classical astrology. Lilly followed after Ptolemy, but Wan Mingyong, in contrast, reproduced the standard formula for reversing lot configurations according to nocturnal and diurnal configurations. Wan Mingyong also used whole-sign configurations, which were the commonest system of House division in early horoscopy. On the other hand, Lilly knew of the planetary joys, which was an important component within classical horoscopy, but Wan Mingyong does not appear to utilize them, even though the concept existed in China.

Lilly's work might be interpreted as Ptolemaic in its orientation, whereas Wan Mingyong and East Asian horoscopy in general can be considered Dorothean. Wan Mingyong in theory could have been exposed to Ptolemaic astrology via the translation of *al-Madkhal* during the early Ming dynasty,

but it does not appear obvious to me at present that he consulted this work in detail.

In closing it is worth emphasizing that horoscopy was a truly global practice in premodern times. This study has demonstrated an example of this. Although there is modern awareness of this art historically in India and Islamdom, historians dealing with the history of astrology and astronomy ought to better consider China as a comparable heir to various astral traditions from India and Iran, especially in light of the fact that voluminous amounts of materials are preserved in Classical Chinese, and we are only in the early stages of excavating them. These materials, I would argue, can be utilized to date and better understand astrology as it developed elsewhere in Asia.

At the same time, we should highlight the fact that Wan Mingyong, a near contemporary of William Lilly living on the other side of Eurasia, produced a work on astrology that was comparable in length and detail as Lilly's *Christian Astrology*. It is clear that horoscopy was just as popular in late-Ming China as it was in contemporary England. The social role and influence of horoscopy in China, however, is a topic that requires future attention.

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Abbreviations

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- SKQS *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書. *Yingyin Wenyuan ge Siku quanshu* 景印文淵閣四庫全書. 1500 vols. Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu yinshuguan, 1983–1986.
- T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. 100 vols. Edited by Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭. Tōkyō: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–1934. Digitized in CBETA (v. 5.2) and SAT Daizōkyō Text Database (<http://21dzk.l.u-Tōkyō.ac.jp/SAT/satdb2015.php>).
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